

# An Evaluation of *A Trail to Every Classroom* *Summer Institute Curriculum Implementation* 2007

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

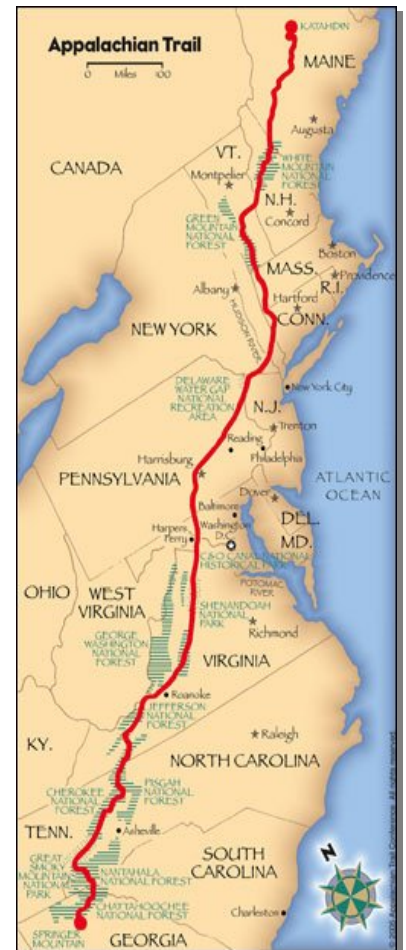
The Trail to Every Classroom (TTEC) project is a collaborative effort between the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, the National Park Service. TTEC's premise is that by offering high quality professional development opportunities that promote place-based education and service-learning, teachers and community partners will develop opportunities to engage youth in trail management activities, and the Appalachian Trail (AT) volunteer tradition will be sustained. The Forest for Every Classroom (FFEC) program in Vermont serves as the model for this pilot initiative. The TTEC Summer Institute consisted of one week of training in the principles and practices of place-based education and service learning along the AT.

### *Evaluation Methods*

The evaluation of the 2006 institute was conducted by external evaluators from PEER Associates, Inc. In 2007, we now seek to understand several aspects of the TTEC program, including curriculum implementation, factors contributing to or creating barriers to successful implementation, and impacted on students' knowledge of and interest in the Appalachian Trail and service-learning. TTEC staff identified educators and community partners at varying degrees of TTEC implementation to participate in the evaluation. Seven projects were represented by both educators and community partners.

### *Summary of Key Evaluation Findings*

- TTEC summer institute participants are implementing TTEC to varying degrees ranging from limited inclusion in curriculum to large projects.
- Successful implementation of TTEC curriculum is influenced by a range of factors including the educator/community partner relationship, administrative support, personal commitment to the project, and available time and resources.



- Likewise, TTEC educators and community partners experienced a *range of challenges to implementation*, including administrative support, education environment (testing and standards), limited time, and limited material resources.
- *The educator/community partner relationship can support effective implementation of projects.* Keys are good communication and commitment to the project.
- *TTEC positively influences educators' knowledge of and involvement with the AT,* in both their professional and personal lives.
- *TTEC positively impacts student learning,* with students showing more interest in learning and the AT.

*"Working with the teacher has been inspiring and more projects have branched out of this relationship." – 2006 TTEC Alumnus, Trail Partner*

*"The students want to volunteer now; they want to help any park they can find. Now, they see the park differently; they treasure the parks." – 2006 TTEC*

## Recommendations & Conclusions

Educators and community partners have found the TTEC program valuable and would like to see it sustained. Program recommendations include:

- Developing multiple types of institutes/workshops and supplemental resources.
- Offer trainings designed for trail partners so that they more fully understand their responsibilities and they can determine how TTEC ties into their existing work.
- Assess educators' understanding of applying place-based education and TTEC curriculum to meeting testing standards.

*"Teaching is more fun now. Everything is just more fun...The kids get so excited and I get more parent involvement because they are excited. Having this program in my classroom has allowed me to get more parents involved." – 2006 TTEC Alumnus, Educator*



*This report was authored by PEER Associates, Inc. A more complete description of the evaluation personnel involved in this project can be found in the Appendices of this report or at [www.PEECworks.org](http://www.PEECworks.org). Evaluation Co-Directors for PEER Associates Amy Powers and Michael Duffin can be contacted at [amy@PEERassociates.net](mailto:amy@PEERassociates.net) or [michael@PEERassociates.net](mailto:michael@PEERassociates.net).*